



[Small School. Big Opportunities. How do I Engage in the Opportunities Our School Offers?]

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Background Leading to My Inquiry

As a middle and high school principal, I spend a lot of time at extracurricular events. Some of the events I am required to attend and supervise, other events I choose to go to on my own. I felt that as much time as I spent at events outside of the regular school day, I wasn't really being intentional with my time and could use it more productively.

The Purpose of My Inquiry

The purpose of my action research was to see if I engaged with others more during my time at extracurricular events, could I build better relationships with others, create new opportunities for students, and improve the culture of our school.

My Wondering

With this purpose, I wondered if I spent time at school functions making better connections, could it improve our school? Could it create new opportunities for our students?

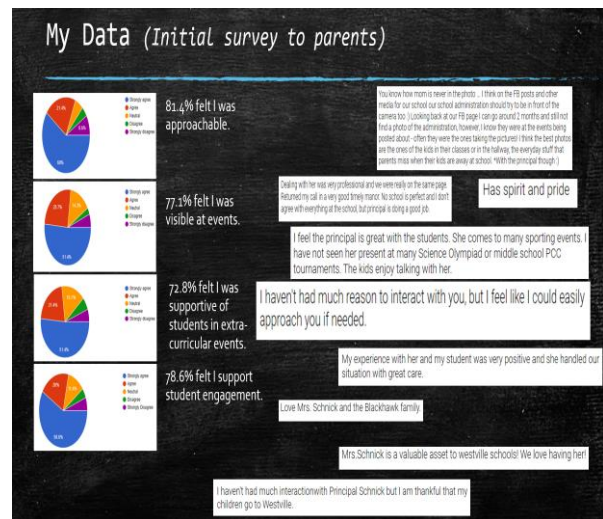
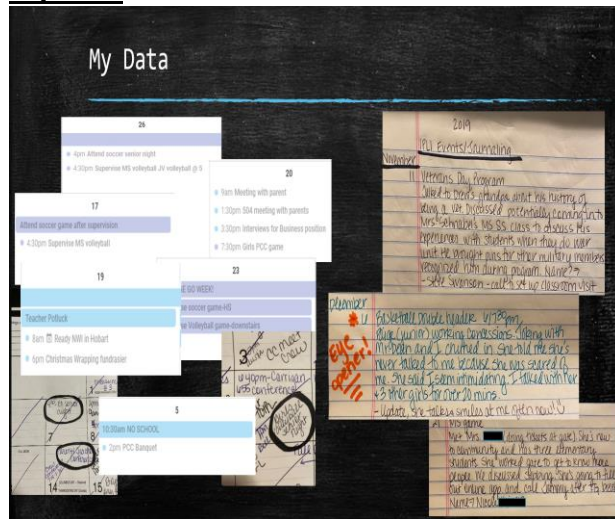
My Actions

I started my project by looking at the events I was required to attend and supervise in Event link. I also wrote down all of the events I chose to attend. After each event, I kept a journal with a brief description of what I did at the event, new people I talked to, students I talked to, and any other notes I felt were important to include. I also sent an anonymous survey to parents to see their perception of me with both them and their student(s).

Data Collection

I collected data through Google calendar, Event link, journaling, notes, and a survey.

My Data



I used Google calendar, my personal calendar, and Event link for events. I think journaled summaries after the events and included notes of discoveries. I sent out a survey to parents, however I was not able to send a follow up survey at the end of the year because of the pandemic. We had no spring events whatsoever for me to attend and therefore I did not feel the data would be accurate.

My Discoveries

- It is important to be approachable as a principal. This includes opening yourself up beyond your comfort zone at times.
- Investing in meaningful conversations can lead to wonderful, new opportunities.

It is important to be approachable as a principal. This includes opening yourself up beyond your comfort zone at times. I am fairly introverted when it comes to socializing at events. I realized through my data collection that only 81% of people thought I was approachable. In journaling, I noted that I talked with a group of students working the concession stand at a volleyball game. One of the girls was a junior and I had not spoken with her before. She told me that I always seem so serious and she was intimidated to talk to me. This was an eye-opener for me.

Investing in meaningful conversations can lead to wonderful, new opportunities. I talked to several parents at the events. I already know most of the parents, but I wanted to get to know more about them, as well as meet new people too. Though my journaling data, you can see that I formed two new committees by engaging with parents. I had a lunch meeting once a month with students where they would come in and eat lunch with me and share their ideas for improving our school. I also formed a parent-group that helped plan various activities and events for the students since we do not have a PTA. This group also helped with graduation even after school had been online for nine weeks.

Where I Am Heading Next

By completing this project, I learned that in a small school it is important to be approachable to students, parents, and staff. I wear many hats in my position, but I need to be mindful of stepping away from the business of everyday tasks and engage in informal conversations with others.

In the future, I have set goals for myself. I plan to push myself to engage with others at events I attend. I plan to gain insight from others ideas and follow through with suggestions. I plan to have more fun! I want to create new opportunities that our school has not had before.

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School Offers?

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- As a middle and high school principal, I spend a lot of time at different events. I wanted to evaluate my time by looking at several different aspects:
 - Am I fully engaged in the event I am attending or am I a body there supervising?
 - Am I “present,” at the events I choose to attend, but know I could/should be doing other tasks?
 - Could I utilize the time at events better?
 - Meet new people
 - Opportunities
 - Network
 - Improve culture of school



Purpose of this Inquiry

- Evaluate my time at school functions and how it is spent
- Get to know students better
- Get to know faculty better
- Get to know parents better
- Get to know the community better
- Make better connections to improve our school



My Wondering

- If I spent time at school functions making better connections, could it improve our school? Could it create new opportunities for our students?



My Actions

- I started by looking at the events I was required to supervise through a program called Event Link.
- I also noted the events I chose to attend.
- I journaled after each event a brief description of what I did at the event, new people I talked to, students I talked to, and any other notes I felt were important to include.
- I sent an anonymous survey to parents in the beginning to see their perception of me both with them and their student(s).
- My project was cut-short due to the pandemic. As a result I was not able to attend any spring events (most winter events ended in January). I did not send out a follow up survey at the end of the year to parents because I felt the data would be inconclusive since I only had one season of events I attended (as compared to most of the year).
- I reviewed the events and notes I collected and created this project with the information I had.



Data Collection

- Google calendar
- Event link
- Events attended record
- Journaling
- Notes
- Survey



My Data

26

- 4pm Attend soccer senior night
- 4:30pm Supervise MS volleyball JV volleyball @ 5

17

Attend soccer game after supervision

- 4:30pm Supervise MS volleyball

19

Teacher Potluck

- 8am ☑ Ready NWI in Hobart
- 6pm Christmas Wrapping fundrasier

23

GO WEEK!

se soccer game-HS

se Volleyball game-downstairs

20

- 9am Meeting with parent
- 1:30pm 504 meeting with parents
- 3:30pm Interviews for Business position
- 7:30pm Girls PCC game

5

10:30am NO SCHOOL

- 2pm PCC Banquet

2019

IPLI Events/Journaling

November

11 Veterans Day Program

Talked to Drew's grandpa about his history of being a vet. Discussed potentially coming in to Mrs. Schnabel's MS SS. class to discuss his experiences with students when they do war unit. He brought pins for other military members recognized him during program. Name? →
- Steve Swanson - call to set up classroom visit

December

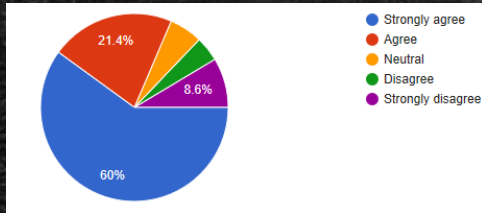
* 11

Basketball double header 4/730pm. Paige (junior) working concessions. Joking with Mr. Deen and I chatted in. She told me she's never talked to me because she was scared of me. She said I seem intimidating. I talked with her + 3 other girls for over 20 mins.
- Update, she talks & smiles at me often now! ☺

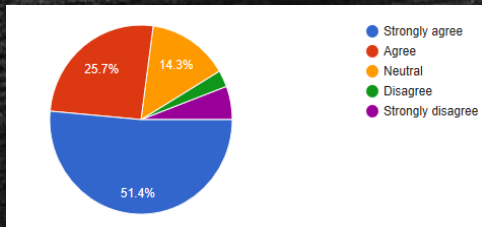
21 MS game

Met Mrs. [redacted] (doing tickets at gate). She's new to community and has three elementary students. She worked gate to get to know more people. We discussed skipping. She's going to find out online app and call Jimmy after. Name? Nicole [redacted]

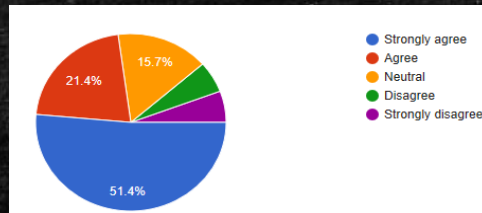
My Data *(Initial survey to parents)*



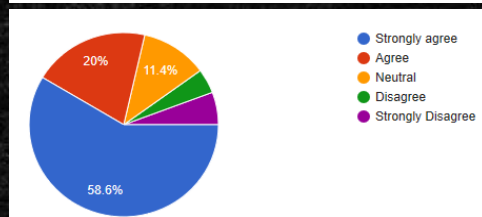
81.4% felt I was approachable.



77.1% felt I was visible at events.



72.8% felt I was supportive of students in extra-curricular events.



78.6% felt I support student engagement.

You know how mom is never in the photo ... I think on the FB posts and other media for our school our school administration should try to be in front of the camera too :) Looking back at our FB page I can go around 2 months and still not find a photo of the administration, however, I know they were at the events being posted about - often they were the ones taking the pictures! I think the best photos are the ones of the kids in their classes or in the hallway, the everyday stuff that parents miss when their kids are away at school. *With the principal though :)

Dealing with her was very professional and we were really on the same page. Returned my call in a very good timely manor. No school is perfect and I don't agree with everything at the school, but principal is doing a good job.

Has spirit and pride

I feel the principal is great with the students. She comes to many sporting events. I have not seen her present at many Science Olympiad or middle school PCC tournaments. The kids enjoy talking with her.

I haven't had much reason to interact with you, but I feel like I could easily approach you if needed.

My experience with her and my student was very positive and she handled our situation with great care.

Love Mrs. Schnick and the Blackhawk family.

Mrs.Schnick is a valuable asset to westville schools! We love having her!

I haven't had much interaction with Principal Schnick but I am thankful that my children go to Westville.



My Discoveries

- Because I am more introverted at events, some people viewed me as unapproachable.
- Being quiet is not always a bad thing, but being too quiet can be misleading.
- I needed to *visit* more at school events. So many times when I am there, I do not socialize. I am so focused on the administrator role, I don't realize the *fun* you can have while doing the job. I also think I feared talking with parents would open the door to complaints and I felt by not interacting with them, I would not always have to hear the ways people want things done differently at the school.
- I got to know some great people! People who took tickets at the gate, students I joked with, and new families.
- I formed two new committees this past year from engaging in conversations with parents / *approached*.
- Taking the time to invest in meaningful conversations with others establishes great relationships and rapport.
- It is important to step outside your comfort zone at times!



Where Am I Heading Next?

- Be more social and engage with others often
- Make it a priority to talk to two new people at each event I attend
- Take the time to have fun with staff!
- Create events that are more personal for both staff and students
- Create ways for others to get to know me better/me to get to know students better

